

Parks and Recreation Division First Quarter Report to the Metropolitan King County Council

The Omnibus Parks Ordinance (Ordinance 14509), adopted November 18, 2002 by the King County Council, included a reporting requirement for the Parks and Recreation Division. Specifically, the ordinance states:

“The division shall provide a written report to the council, filed with the clerk of the council, at least four times each year, by March 15, June 15, September 15, and December 15, and more frequently as directed by the council by motion, regarding the execution of the division’s duties and responsibilities as established in K.C.C, 2.16.045.E. Following transmittal of each written report, the division shall also make an oral presentation to the council. The written reports and oral presentations shall include, but shall not be limited to, information as to the division’s efforts in:

- A. Meeting revenue targets under section 7 of this ordinance;
- B. Implementing entrepreneurial strategies including advertising, leasing and concession agreements;
- C. Pursuing gifts, bequests and donations, including the value and sources of gifts, bequests and donations received;
- D. Developing agreements with other organizations to provide recreation services;
- E. Transferring parks and recreation assets within incorporated areas or potential annexations areas to cities; and
- F. Community outreach and involvement.”

The following report responds to the reporting requirements of the Omnibus Parks Ordinance.

Section A. Meeting Revenue Targets

The Parks and Recreation Division's 2003 budget totals \$16.4 million. Of that amount, \$1.2 million is anticipated to come from new, entrepreneurial efforts; \$3.6 million is anticipated to be generated by user fee revenue of which a significant portion is based on fee increases the Parks Division implemented in January 2003; \$2.3 million to come from intergovernmental transfers; and \$116,000 is anticipated to come from miscellaneous sources such as easements and special use permits.

The following table identifies revenues received to date in 2003 compared to the first quarter of 2002.

Table 1: User Fee and Enterprise Revenues 2002 - 2003

	1 st Qtr 2002	1 st Qtr 2003	Anticipated 2003
Aquatics User Fees ¹	\$322,204	\$407,127	\$1,453,485
Other User Fees and Rentals ²	\$170,204	\$214,092	\$2,154,571
New Enterprise Revenue ³	\$0	\$75,358	\$1,177,107
Intergovernmental ⁴	\$0	\$0	\$2,360,733
Other ⁵	\$10,714	\$7,312	\$116,060
TOTAL:	\$503,122	\$703,889	\$7,261,956

The peak period for user fee revenue generation in the Parks Division is between March and October. During that peak period nearly all facilities are open and available for rental and use. During the months January through February and November to December, a large portion of the park system is not available for rental, (e.g. grass athletic fields), and use by the public is generally much lower. Therefore, it is too early to tell with certainty whether the Division will meet anticipated revenue targets for 2003 based on revenue receipts from the first quarter. The Division set fees at levels to meet revenue targets established in the Omnibus Parks Ordinance. Generally, for those facilities and services that are available during the months of January, February and March, demand for services has not dropped significantly in light of fee increases, and in many instances demand has not dropped at all. The Division will continue to monitor closely revenue from user fees and entrepreneurial means and will be reporting to the Council on a quarterly basis.

(1) Aquatics User Fees

The user fee revenues identified in the table cover user fees at the three unincorporated area pools (Renton, Tahoma, and Evergreen) and the King County Aquatic Center. The table does not include aquatic user fee revenues from those pools the Parks Division is operating under an operating agreement with a city. In order to meet the revenue targets established in the Omnibus Parks Ordinance, the Division needs to increase aquatic user fee revenues by approximately 25% in 2003. In the first quarter of 2003, aquatics user fees for the three unincorporated area pools and the King County Aquatic Center are up approximately 26% in aggregate compared to the first quarter of 2002, slightly above the 25% goal. The percentage revenue changes for each individual pool are as follows:

KCAC: 42%; Renton Pool: 28%; Tahoma Pool: 12%; Evergreen Pool: -9%. The primary reasons the Evergreen Pool revenues are down is because the pool is operating on a reduced schedule based on anticipated demand and the pool is in a low income area. The Parks Division will continue to closely monitor revenue from aquatics user fees to determine whether adjustments in user fees are warranted in order to increase revenue.

The following table identifies individual pools revenues:

Table 2: Aquatic Users Fees 2002 and 2003

	1st Qtr 2002	1st Qtr 2003	% Change
Evergreen	\$37,055	\$33,796	-9%
Renton	\$59,825	\$76,653	28%
Tahoma	\$78,597	\$87,942	12%
KCAC	\$146,725	\$208,735	42%
TOTAL	\$322,204	\$407,127	26%

(2) Other User Fees and Rentals

This category includes athletic field rentals, picnic shelters, building rentals, and recreation programs. These fees apply to the Fairgrounds, Community Centers, and all parks with ballfields or picnic shelters. There is typically very little activity during the first several months of the year for these facilities and programs. For example, of the 117 athletic fields the county owns and operates in 2003, only 9 sand athletic fields are open and available during the months of January and February. Based on the Omnibus Parks Ordinance, athletic field user fees were generally increased 100%, with the exception of sand soccer fields, which were held at 2002 levels. All other user fees were increased an average of 25%.

In aggregate, fee revenue from these sources in the first quarter of 2003 is up 25% compared to the first quarter of 2002. The percentage increase for the major categories are as follows: Fairgrounds: 38%; Fields/Facilities: 12%; Recreation Programs: 4%. The Fairgrounds revenue increase of 38% exceeds the goal of 25% revenue increase for facility rentals. The 12% increase in field/facility rentals is viewed positively by the Division since the only athletic fields available for rental during most of the first quarter were the sand athletic fields and the user fees in place during the first quarter 2003 were the same as 2002 user fees. The County Council recently approved a user fee increase for the sand athletic fields that will go into effect starting April 1, 2003. With all ballfields open and available for the second and third quarters, and use of picnic shelters increasing with the spring and summer seasons, revenues from field/facility rentals should begin to increase dramatically during the second and third quarters. The 4% increase in revenues from recreation programs is not a surprise given the County cut most of its recreation programs in the 2002 and 2003 budgets.

Table 3: Field and Facility User Fee Revenues 2002 and 2003

	1st Qtr 2002	1st Qtr 2003	% Change
Fairgrounds	\$91,238.74	\$126,289.99	38%
Fields/Facilities	\$68,764.90	\$77,179.81	12%

Recreation Programs	\$10,201.30	\$10,623.11	4%
TOTAL	\$170,204.94	\$214,092.91	25%

(3) New Enterprise Activities

The 2003 Parks and Recreation Division Budget assumes \$1.2 million in revenue from new ways of doing business. The Division began implementing the \$1 parking fee at Marymoor Park in early February, which to date has generated \$75,358. Based on current collection rates, the parking fee is anticipated to generate between \$350,000 and \$400,000 for the entire year. The Division has a signed agreement for a Concert Series at Marymoor Park that is projected to generate up to \$300,000 in 2003. The revenue estimate for the concert series is based on the number of shows booked and the agreement in place between the County and the concert series promoter. The concert series begins in June. In addition to these endeavors the Division is currently assessing approximately 20 other efforts to generate revenue. The Division is in the initial stages of assessing these efforts, but preliminary assessment indicates that up to \$67,000 in revenue could be generated in 2003. The Division has also received approximately \$110,000 in revenues from events that occurred in 2002, but the money was received after the 2002 books were closed. In total the Parking Fee, Concert Series, RFP related efforts already underway, and unanticipated late payments from 2002 are anticipated to generate between \$800,000 and \$900,000 in revenue in 2003, or three quarters of the \$1.2 million target. The Division continues to work hard to identify other entrepreneurial efforts in order to meet the \$1.2 million target.

(4) Intergovernmental

The 2003 Parks and Recreation Division budget includes \$2.36 million in Intergovernmental revenues, including \$640,000 of Surface Water Management dollars to support maintenance of the resource and ecological lands, \$288,804 in Road Fund dollars to support maintenance of the unincorporated area regional trails, \$500,000 in one-time Wastewater dollars for an easement, and \$931,929 in REET dollars to support the Divisions capital program and land management responsibilities. These intergovernmental revenues will be transferring by the end of the year.

(5) Other

The Division anticipates \$116,060 in 2003 from miscellaneous revenue sources, for example easements and special use permits for utilities. This estimate is based on historical revenues from these sources.

Section B. Implementing Entrepreneurial Strategies

As indicated in the previous section of this report, the 2003 Parks and Recreation Division Budget anticipates \$1.2 million in revenue from new ways of doing business. Pursuing revenue through entrepreneurial means was a key recommendation of the Metropolitan Park Task Force as well as the Executive's Parks Business Transition Plan. The Division has an array of efforts underway to implement these new ways of doing business.

RFP - In the late Fall of 2002 the Division put out a Request for Proposals (RFP) for creative revenue generating ideas. The Division received approximately 30 responses to the RFP in January 2003. The Division has reviewed all the RFP responses and is following up with approximately 20 of them, including small to medium size food and beverage vendors at various locations, swimwear vendors, dog wash vendors, and a trail running series. The Cougar Mountain Trail Running Series can be found at the following web address: <http://www.seattlerunningcompany.com/cougarmtn1.html> The Division has not completed a detailed revenue analysis of all of these proposals but assessment work done to date indicates that these efforts could generate up to \$67,000 in 2003.

The Table below identifies the various RFP responses, their potential revenue for 2003, and status.

Title	2003 revenue range	Comments/Status
Superlative Group – municipal marketing	Unknown at this time	Under discussion with proposer; proposal is to find sponsors and/or naming rights for a variety of parks facilities, equipment or functions
Pacific Bay Swim and Sport at King County Aquatic Center	\$7,500- \$15,000	Under discussion with proposer; proposal is to sell swimsuits and swimming related gear
Ruff House Express – dog wash at Marymoor Dog Park	\$0 - \$5,000	Under discussion with proposer, reviewing infrastructure needs
Cougar Mountain Trail Running Series	\$6,000 - \$40,000	Finalizing agreement; actual revenue will depend on number of runners at events
Canopy Adventures Tree Climbing Courses	\$500 - \$1,250	Under discussion with proposer; proposal is to teach courses on Parks property
Billy McHales/Bud Bay Café catering	Being assessed by staff	Under discussion with proposer; proposal is for food/beverages at park locations
Car Show and Barbecue at King County Aquatic Center	\$3,500 - \$6,000	Under discussion with proposer; proposal is for a single events
Sound Parking Batting Cages	Being assessed by	Under discussion with proposer;

	staff	proposal is to develop and operate batting cages at a park location
Evergreen Food Service – vending at pools	Being assessed by staff	Under discussion with proposer; proposal is for food/beverages at pool locations
Grandview Park Off Leash Dog Area (SODA South)	Being assessed by staff	Grandview Park is inside the city limits of SeaTac. Parks staff working with cities of SeaTac, Kent, and other south end cities to first transfer the site to SeaTac and then jointly work with proposer to develop a dog park area.
Clear Channel Outdoor – Billboard Advertising	Revenue potential is significant	Proposal is for billboards on Park properties; proposal currently on hold
King County Search Dogs	\$0	Request was for free usage of park to train dogs
Mount Rainier Baseball – Farmer’s Park	\$0	More appropriate as an ADOP proposal
Rise-n-Shine Dog Wash at Marymoor Park Dog Park	Being assessed by staff	Under discussion with proposer
Co-Rec Soccer – maintenance at Marymoor Park	\$0	More appropriate as an ADOP proposal
Adopt a Tree or Bush	Being assessed by staff, minimal revenue likely	Concept covered by donations
IEG Consulting Sponsorship Packages	Being assessed by staff	Under discussion with proposer, would involve large consulting fee
Mitigation Bank at Swamp Creek Park	Likely not a Parks Effort	Swamp Creek is a natural land site, inside city limits – intent is to transfer the site, revenue potential is small and years off
	\$17,500 - \$67,250	

Marymoor Parking Fee - The Division began implementing a \$1 parking fee at Marymoor Park in early February. Through March 31st the parking fee has generated \$75,358. The Division placed temporary honor boxes in each of the parking lots throughout the park. The Division is finalizing plans for a more permanent system and will present that to Council during the second quarter. The parking fee is anticipated to generate between \$350,000 and \$400,000 for the entire year.

Concert Series - The Parks Division has a signed agreement for a Concert Series at Marymoor Park that is projected to generate up to \$300,000 in 2003. The Concert Series

will begin in early June and run through early September. The Division will not begin collecting revenue until the Concert Series begins in June. The Division is very excited about the quality of the artists that have been secured for the Concert Series, including the first announced artist, Grammy award winning Norah Jones. The Division has also been talking with potential corporate sponsors regarding a naming right for the concert venue as well as advertising opportunities. Any naming rights and advertising revenues would be in addition to the anticipated \$300,000 from the concert series itself. To date, the Division has not secured any naming rights or advertising revenue for the concert venue, but continues to work toward that goal.

Advertising - The Division has developed two brochures intended to foster advertising revenue. The first brochure identifies advertising opportunities and prices on ballfield fences, the Velodrome fence, and community center and pool walls. The second brochure identifies a variety of advertising and naming rights opportunities at the King County Aquatic Center, including advertising on the pool liner, the scoreboard, starting blocks, and the outside reader board along the road. The Division has begun sending the brochures out to local corporations. To date several have expressed interest and are discussing different opportunities with the Division, but none have made financial commitments. The Division is also looking for partners to advertise on fixed, in-ground garbage cans at Marymoor Park.

Employee Cost/Revenue Team - The Division has formed an employee revenue generating and cost-saving team. The team is identifying project proposals that save operating costs, or generate net revenue. An example of a cost saving recommendation from this team is consolidation of email accounts for field maintenance personnel, saving the Division nearly \$12,000 a year. Examples of revenue generating projects being developed by the employee team include the development of campgrounds at various park locations and birthday party packages at remaining County pool locations.

Revised Financial Systems - The Parks Division has revised its financial tracking system in ARMS by the development of an organizational structure consistent with the new mission of the Division. Project accounting has been refined to ensure the ability to track expenditures by site or project and link it to revenues for each, something that was not easily done with the former system. An electronic, relational database time sheet tracking system is in the process of final testing for implementation. It will allow each employee to enter data on a daily basis for entry into ARMS electronically for labor distribution. This will replace the current manual system.

Driving Range - The Division is working on an RFP to develop and operate a driving range at Marymoor Park. The Division anticipates having an RFP out on the street during the second quarter.

The Parking Fee, Concert Series, and RFP efforts already underway are anticipated to generate between \$700,000 and \$800,000 in revenue. This revenue is not guaranteed, but is viewed by the Division as highly likely. In addition the Division has received approximately \$110,000 in revenues from events that occurred in 2002, but the money

was received after the 2002 books were closed. Therefore, the revenue is included in the 2003 budget. The Division continues to work hard to identify other entrepreneurial efforts in order to meet the \$1.2 million target.

Table 2: Enterprise Activities and Anticipated Revenue

ACTIVITY	REVENUE to DATE	REVENUE ANTICIPATED
Marymoor Parking Fee	\$75,358	\$350,000 to \$400,000
Marymoor Concert Series	\$0	\$300,000
Various Concessions & RFPs	\$17,500	\$67,000
Unidentified Enterprise Efforts	<u>\$110,000</u>	<u>\$433,000 to \$483,000</u>
TOTAL:	\$202,858	\$1,150,000 to \$1,250,000

Section C. Pursuing Gifts, Bequests and Donations

The Parks and Recreation Division is pursuing opportunities for gifts and donations. The Division has approached local corporations for donations and sponsorships related to individual parks and recreation programs. The Division has also created a list of equipment and facilities that can be donated to the County. Because the Division's efforts to obtain gifts commenced only recently, to date the Parks Division has received no revenue in 2003 from donations or gifts. The Division has received a defibrillator from the Federal Way Fire Department. Several corporations have expressed interest and the Division will continue to pursue revenue from these sources in the 2nd quarter of 2003.

The Division is currently working with the family of one individual on a donation to Cougar Mountain Park. The donation is expected to be in the neighborhood of \$6,000.

The Parks Division has just received a grant of \$46,202 from the Washington State Department of Agriculture for the King County Fair event. The Friends of Marymoor Park also received a \$37,500 grant from the Urban Forestry Program via the Water and Land Resources Division to reforest an area of declining cottonwood trees. The Serve Our Dog Area (SODA) group donated \$25,000 worth of split rail fencing to the project as well.

The Parks Division is developing a list of parks equipment and facilities that can be donated or sponsored. The initial draft list, which is not inclusive and will be posted on the Division's web page when completed, is as follows:

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>PRICE</u>
Cash Donation	Varies
Maintenance Support of specific park, pool, facility or garden	Varies
Plastic Lumber	Varies
Lumber	Varies
Equipment (mowers, chainsaws, blowers, edgers)	Varies
Cedar Split Rail Fencing (varies with l. feet)	Varies
Tree (varies on species and size; cost includes installation)	\$250 average
Bench (cost includes installation & plaque)	\$1,250
Interpretive signage (varies w/number and design)	Aver. \$1,500
Recycle Bins	\$60.00
Garbage Cans (in ground)	\$1,200
Drinking Fountain (includes installation and permit)	\$2,500
Gazebo (includes installation and permit) varies w/size	Small \$5,000 Large \$25,000
Picnic Tables	\$2,500
Arbors	\$1,200
Basketball Court	\$80,000
Athletic Field (soccer, baseball, cricket, softball, rugby, lacrosse)	\$350,000 - \$1 million

Skateboard or Extreme Park (in line skates, scooters, BMX)	\$500,000
Climbing rocks (portable or permanent)	Perm. \$500,000
	Port. \$200,000
Portable stage	Port. \$80,000
Garden (varies w/type and size)	Aver. \$25,000
Yurts	\$10,000.00
Pool Slide (varies w/size)	\$25,000– \$50,000
Pool Float Toy	\$10,000 – \$50,000
Competitive Lane Lines	\$30,000 – \$50,000
Diving Board	\$5,000
Starting Blocks	\$35,000 – \$40,000
CPR Mannequins	\$5,000 each
Defibrillators	\$5,000 each

In the fall of 2002, an independent group formed a non-profit foundation, Friends of King County Parks, to support King County park facilities. Since forming the group has changed its name to Northwest Parks Foundation and broadened its focus beyond King County boundaries. The Northwest Parks Foundation intends on supporting park and recreation facilities throughout King County and the Pacific Northwest through financial endowments, organizational grants and capital projects. To date the Division has received no donations or grants through the Foundation.

Section D. Implementing Agreements With Other Organizations

The primary approach the Parks Division will utilize to develop agreements with user group organizations to provide recreation services is the Association Development Operating Partnerships ADOPs Program. The ADOP Program is a creation and recommendation of the Active Sports Youth Recreation Commission (ASPYRe) to provide grants to user groups and community-based organizations to develop, operate and/or maintain a public park or recreation facility.

There is a total of \$605,000 in the Division's 2003 Capital Budget for the ADOP Program. A 2003 Budget Proviso requires the Council to approve ADOP Program guidelines and criteria before allowing the Executive to implement the program. The motion adopting the ADOPS program guidelines and selection criteria was adopted by the County Council on March 31, 2003.

The Parks Division has been informally working with user groups in anticipation of the ADOP Program and following is a list of user groups who have already expressed interest in applying for an ADOP grant award:

- T.O.P.S. / King County Regional Indoor Tennis Center (with Tennis Outreach Programs for Puget Sound)
- Pacific Northwest Rugby Union / King County Regional Rugby Fields
- PSSBL/FAF/King County Regional Community Baseball Stadium
- Maple Valley Sub-Regional Field Complex with the Tahoma Sports Council
- Regional RC Model Airplane Flying Facility with Several RC groups
- WRS (We Ride Sideways)-West/King County Pacific NW Mountainboarding Facility
- BBTC / King County Backcountry Mountainbiking Course (with Bicycle Trails Association)
- Small Craft / Rowing Facility in South King County
- Disc NW / King County regional Ultimate Frisbee Fields

In addition to the ADOPs Program, the Division has implemented or is working on a number of other partnerships, identified below.

King County reached agreement with the Boys and Girls Club to operate the West Hill and Gold Creek Community Centers under a long-term lease arrangement.

The Division is working with Redmond Little League on a concession agreement to operate and maintain the new Redmond Ridge Park, which is scheduled to open June 1st.

The Division developed two partnerships to provide interpretive programs which were eliminated in the 2003 budget. The first partnership was with Nature Visions, a non-profit, which will continue providing interpretive classes to schools throughout King County using the Parks Division interpretive program materials. Nature Visions was formed by two former King County Park Division employees. The second partnership is

with the City of Kent and the Friends of Soos Creek Park to continue providing interpretive/educational walks at Soos Creek Park.

The Division continues to work with a user group to develop a privately financed athletic field complex at Marymoor Park. The complex would be available to the public and would result in no maintenance or operation burden on the Parks Division.

The Division has partnered with the Serve Our Dog Area user group to sell six-month parking passes for Marymoor Park. The effort has generated additional pass sales for the Division, generated more than \$2,000 for the organization, and has increased SODA membership by nearly 90 members.

In addition to pursuing new agreements with organizations, the Division is currently working with existing user groups to review and potentially revise long term use agreements to ensure County Park Division costs are fully reimbursed, generate small amounts of revenue and protect the long term use of the activity. Examples include new, long term agreements for the pea patch, velodrome and rowing club areas at Marymoor Park. The goal of the Parks Division is to work with these valued user groups to ensure that County maintenance costs are covered. The Division also is interested in generating net revenue from these agreements to the extent the user groups have ability to pay.

Section E. Transferring Parks and Recreation Assets

At the start of 2002 the Parks and Recreation Division had a total of 10 local pools and two dozen local parks and community centers inside incorporated boundaries. The total cost of operating these facilities was approximately \$7 million. To date, King County has completed transfer agreements on 7 of the 10 local in-city pools (Redmond, Mercer Island, Kent, Federal Way, Northshore, Tukwila, and Enumclaw) and twelve local parks. Of the three remaining local in-city pools, the Auburn Pool is currently in a mothball state, the Mt. Rainier Pool in Des Moines is open to the public under a one-year operating agreement and a transfer agreement is forthcoming on the Mt Si pool.

The parks that have been transferred include:

Juanita Beach Park	City of Kirkland
Eastgate Park	City of Bellevue
Manor Hill Park	City of Bellevue
Lake Burien School Site	City of Burien
Jenkins Creek Park	City of Covington
Luther Burbank Park	City of Mercer Island
Lea Hill Park	City of Auburn
Auburndale Two Park	City of Auburn
Salmon Creek Waterway	City of Burien
Lake Wilderness Park	City of Maple Valley
Fort Dent Park	City of Tukwila
Beaver Lake Park	City of Sammamish

There are fourteen local in-city parks remaining in the King County inventory. All of the local in-city parks are currently in a mothball state. The Division continues to work with cities on the transfer of these local parks.

In addition to the transfer agreements identified above, the County reached agreement with the Boys and Girls Club to operate the West Hill and Gold Creek Community Centers under a long-term lease arrangement.

Section F. Community Outreach and Involvement

The King County Parks and Recreation Division has pursued broader and more aggressive outreach techniques as part of its new way of doing business. A significant step forward was a plan developed collaboratively with consultant Lee Springgate of the Point Wilson Group. The plan outlines a long-term public outreach strategy to help the parks division reconnect with the public, user groups and decision-makers it serves. Per the Omnibus Parks Ordinance, this outreach strategy was delivered to the clerk of the Council in February 2003.

Outreach activities from November 2002 – February 2003 include:

- *Reconnecting People to Their Parks*, long-term outreach strategy developed collaboratively with The Point Wilson Group
- Executive listserve messages
- User Fee increase outreach
- Marymoor parking fee outreach
- Web page enhancements

Reconnecting People to Their Parks: Outreach and Reconnecting Strategy: Part of changing the way King County Parks does business is enhancing its relationship with the public it serves. In November 2002 a public outreach steering committee was established to work with the Point Wilson Group to develop a long-term outreach strategy for reconnecting with the public. The group met five times for two hours each to work with Point Wilson consultants Lee Springgate and Christi Zellerhoff to develop the plan. The result of the effort is a comprehensive plan for reconnecting with the public. A copy of the plan was delivered to the clerk of the council in February 2003. An internal working group was established In February 2003 to implement the plan.

Executive Listserve Messages: The Executive listserve was created in spring 2002 to keep hundreds of public meeting participants apprised of rapid progress in the parks transition plan. At sign-in, meeting participants were asked to provide their e-mail addresses if interested in receiving updates on the parks transition.

Initially the listserve was used by the Executive to communicate significant milestones in the parks transition process such as the Task Force Phase I recommendations, the Executive's recommendations to Council and new, entrepreneurial ventures. With the rapidly increasing pace of change, communication has occurred more regularly, nearly weekly. Listserve messages are also available on the Executive's website.

The listserve initially reached 400 people and has expanded to reach 732. Outreach strategies used to expand the list include:

- The online poll on the future of King County parks, posted in conjunction with public meetings in spring 2002, asked people to submit their e-mail if interested in receiving updates on the parks transition.

- The parks transition website invites people to sign-up for the listserve to receive regular updates on transition activities.
- Cards with the transition website address and directions on how to subscribe to the listserve are given out at parks facilities and mailed with reservation information.
- Written responses to comments or inquiries from parks users invite them to subscribe to the listserve for regular updates.

A copy of each Listserve message is attached to this report as Appendix A.

Fee Increase Outreach – General: A broad outreach effort was undertaken as part of the process for increasing user fees at park facilities. Proposed fees were:

- published in the Seattle Times,
- posted at affected facilities,
- posted on the Internet,
- direct mailed to over 400 user groups, and
- a special e-mail address was established to receive feedback

Approximately 280 comments were received. Of those:

- Three commented on pea-patch fees
- Three commented on general recreation fees
- Eight commented on aquatics fees
- 266 focused on parking charges at Marymoor

The following summary on user fee increase outreach and response, was previously submitted to Council in January 2003:

Please find attached below the new Park and Recreation user fees. These fee increases have been signed by the Director of the Department of Natural Resources and Parks and will take effect January 2, 2003.

Consistent with Ordinance No. 14509 (Omnibus Ordinance), proposed user fees were developed based on the criteria required under the Omnibus Ordinance. The criteria included the target revenue rates adopted in the Omnibus Ordinance.

Proposed fees were transmitted to the County Council prior to the Thanksgiving holiday. The fees were published in the Seattle Times, consistent with the Omnibus Ordinance, on Friday, November 29. In addition, the proposed fees were posted at affected facilities, posted on the Internet on November 27, and direct mailed to over 400 user groups. The Parks department set up a special e-mail address: parks.feedback@metrokc.gov to receive feedback. In addition feedback was also accepted by mail. The fee notices indicated that comments on the proposed fees would be accepted through December 20.

Approximately 280 comments on fees were received by e-mail and five were received by regular mail. Of those, three commented on pea-patch fees (generally indicating

that the increased fees were in line with other pea patches); three commented on general recreation fees; and eight commented on aquatics fees. The remainder of the comments (approximately 266) focused on parking charges at Marymoor in response to broadcast e-mails sent by SODA (Serve Our Dog Areas).

The over-arching theme was that \$1 for parking was acceptable; \$20 per month was acceptable, but \$125 per year was too high. The annual pass was the exclusive focus of most of the comments. Most respondents indicated that an annual fee that was less than \$100 was more acceptable. Respondents indicated that convenience was important and that they preferred the option of a pass so they would not have to carry correct change. Many people also commented on how important Marymoor was to them and that they were willing to pay to keep it open. Others had similar comments about King County Pools and how important it was to keep those open. Respondents frequently commented that they paid taxes for parks and therefore new or increased fees were not appropriate. Several, however, recognized the current revenue realities facing the County.

In response to the comments and continuing staff review of the proposed fees, several proposed fees were modified. In particular, an annual fee for Marymoor parking will not be implemented at this time. Instead an introductory six-month pass for \$50 will be offered. The \$125 annual pass was not popular, and current plans anticipate implementing parking at Marymoor in phases - using honor boxes through July, followed by electronic technology thereafter. A six-month pass would facilitate this transition. In addition, several aquatics and equipment rental fees were reduced from proposed levels, based on feedback from users and parks staff.

Thank you for your attention. Please let me know if you have any questions.

*Bob Burns, Acting Manager
Parks and Recreation Division*

Fee Increase Outreach – Marymoor Parking Fee: Because responses to fee increases overwhelmingly addressed the Marymoor parking fee, the fee was modified and outreach activities were implemented. Outreach activities included:

- A partnership with Serve Our Dog Area to sell six-month parking passes, and
- The first day of the parking fee staff were present at Marymoor to answer questions.

In response to feedback, the proposed annual fee for Marymoor parking is not being offered. Instead, an introductory six-month pass for \$50 is being offered.

A partnership with Serve Our Area (S.O.D.A.) was established for selling parking passes. This outreach technique provided mutual benefits to King County and S.O.D.A. S.O.D.A. sold the \$50 parking pass to its members for \$55 with \$5 going to support S.O.D.A. Selling the parking pass allowed S.O.D.A. to raise money for its stewardship of the off-leash area at Marymoor and boosted its membership.

On the first day of the one-dollar parking fee at Marymoor, King County staff were present on a voluntary basis in parking lots throughout the park to explain how the parking fee worked, and answer questions about why it is necessary. Staff distributed fact sheets to the thousands of Saturday visitors and helped Marymoor users navigate the collection system.

Web Page Enhancements: The Parks Division has been steadily making improvements to its web pages. The Division has been posting all information regarding new ways of doing business, the Parks Task Force and the Executive's Business Transition Plan on its web pages. The Division has also revamped the Parks web page, making it easier for citizens to navigate the site, find information on individual parks and park features. The Division has also added a comment box on its web page to accept citizen input. Parks staff are working to add a donation element to the web page, which should be completed by June, 2003.

Other Outreach Efforts – Volunteers: The Parks Division has a total of 72 volunteer events scheduled on 15 different park sites for the first 6 months of the year. These volunteer efforts are expected to generate about 900 individual volunteers and 1800 hours of labor.

Appendix A
Executive Listserve Messages
November 2002 – February 2003

11/1/02

Dear Parks Supporter:

We have been working hard the past week on passing the 2003 budget, which provides the framework and many of the changes necessary to give the Parks department the flexibility necessary to pursue new, entrepreneurial ways of doing business. At this point, I am optimistic about beginning 2003 with the tools necessary to continue the transition we have begun.

Seasonal Closures

As a reminder of the challenges before us, budget constraints and I-747 will force seasonal closure of some parks beginning today. Although we are making positive changes in how we do business in our parks, like the innovative partnerships and entrepreneurial ventures announced over the past few weeks, we still face the very real challenge of a general revenue fund strained by an antiquated tax system, annexations and incorporations and initiatives. For more information see:

<http://www.metrokc.gov/exec/news/2002/110102.htm>

Transfers

Negotiations with cities to transfer parks and pools are going well and I anticipate making an announcement soon about some important transfers. I know pools are of particular concern to many of you. With the exception of Mercer Island, which has indicated it does not want the Mary Wayte Pool, we continue to move forward on all fronts. However, if we do not have transfer agreements, we will have to mothball pools January 1, 2003.

We are offering a generous financial package to cities willing to take their local pools: five years of capital needs, \$50,000 for capital improvements and enough to operate the pool for 3-4 months (our cost to mothball). If some pools do close, we will continue seeking ways to reopen. We will not be able to operate them, but we will look for creative partnerships. For example, we have been talking to the YMCA.

Be assured I will keep you up to date as news of transfers develops.

Sincerely,

Ron Sims

11/8/02

Dear parks supporter:

The Tukwila City Council voted to take the South Central pool and Enumclaw offered to pay the County to run its pool until it can go to the voters in February for a levy lid lift. Also, the ballot measures in Kirkland that would allow for the transfer of Juanita Beach Park are passing.

King County appreciates the willingness of cities like Tukwila and Enumclaw to work collaboratively in the interest of the public. This kind of collaboration is essential to keeping community assets like parks and pools open and accessible to the public. Each agreement reflects the unique needs and assets of the city, while allowing the County to maintain its goal of not funding the operation of any in-city, local pool as of January 1, 2003. This is crucial to our goal of becoming financially stable so we can preserve the parks system in ways that will make its assets available to the public for years to come. For more information on the Tukwila transfer, see <http://www.metrokc.gov/exec/news/2002/110402.htm>

Details on an agreement with Enumclaw are still being finalized and I will share those with you as soon as they are complete.

The King County Council yesterday passed the parks business plan giving parks the power to pursue some revenue-generating initiatives without Council approval. This is a tremendous step forward in our efforts to put parks on stable financial and operational footing. This action gives us the freedom to continue pursuing the transition begun last spring that has us focusing on regional trails, passive recreation parks, regional sports facilities and rural parks while working to transfer facilities within city limits to those cities. The plan also allows us to pursue new revenue-generating initiatives that received support at the public meetings conducted last May. These include enhanced services, like the concert series and driving range announced at Marymoor Park, and higher use fees.

The parks business plan passing and progress on transfers are major milestones and position us well going into next year – a crucial year for the future of parks in King County. We continue to move forward with negotiations to transfer parks and pools and hope to have many to announce in the coming weeks.

I will keep you informed as we continue our work.

Sincerely,

Ron Sims

11/22/02

Dear Parks Supporter:

This week, we announced the transfer of several parks and pools. In the face of an unprecedented budget crisis this is the crucial step needed to ensure the public can continue to enjoy these parks assets for years to come. The move will also help parks reach stable financial and operational footing by saving more than \$1 million annually.

Transfer agreements for parks and pools

Agreements to transfer or lease seven parks and two pools will allow King County to avoid mothballing these facilities at the end of the year and could save King County taxpayers as much as \$1 million. This is part of King County's plans to refocus its role as a regional service provider by limiting its operation of parks and pools within city jurisdictions.

The transfers are now before the King County Council and all cities have either approved the agreements or indicated they will approve them in advance of King County Council action.

For more information see <http://www.metrokc.gov/exec/news/2002/112002.htm>.

Another batch of transfers will be forwarded to the King County Council next week.

Sincerely,

Ron Sims
King County Executive

11/27/02

Dear Parks Supporter:

As we enter the final month of 2002, our aggressive efforts at creating a financially stable park system continue. Driving this effort is the importance people throughout King County place on parks. Whether it is their neighborhood park, the opportunity to participate in Little League, or hike wooded trails, people count on parks as an important asset in our quality of life in King County. This week we took important steps to keep parks accessible to the public and increase revenues for active recreation facilities through modest fee increases.

More transfers announced

Yesterday we announced 11 parks, community centers and trails will remain open to the public thanks to transfer and lease agreements achieved with cities. In addition to the 11 agreements announced last week and two earlier this year, we have been able to work with 15 cities to keep 22 park facilities open for public use. For more information see <http://www.metrokc.gov/exec/news/2002/1126021.htm>

Modest fee increases will help maintain fields and other active recreation facilities

Hundreds of park users expressed their support for raising fees during public outreach conducted last spring for the development of the parks transition plan. The modest increase, only the second since 1993, brings King County fees in line with those throughout the region. Kids, seniors and the disabled will continue to pay less. In considering changes, we made every effort to keep fees affordable for everyone. Some examples are:

- Each child will pay less than a dollar to play a game of baseball or soccer.
- Adults will pay a little over \$2 each to play baseball or soccer.
- You can hold a 25-person birthday party at a pool for about \$3.50 per person.
- A family can go swimming together for \$3 per person as opposed to paying \$5-\$8 each for a movie.

People paying fees to use baseball fields, soccer fields or picnic sites can feel good that every penny collected will support King County Parks. Though fees will not cover all maintenance and operations costs, they will go a long way toward helping to defray costs.

For more information see <http://www.metrokc.gov/parks/>

As I have said before, we greatly appreciate your continued interest in and support of parks. Our success in continuing to manage quality parks, trails and resource and ecological lands depends on the support we get from you. Be assured I will keep you updated as we continue our work stabilizing parks.

Sincerely,

Ron Sims

Jan. 10, 2003

King County Parks update

Dear King County Parks supporter:

Last year was one of tremendous challenges for Parks. I would like to thank each and every one of you for supporting parks and helping us define our plan for the future. More than 3,200 people provided input that was used in shaping the Parks Business Transition Plan. Your feedback was heard through a phone survey, public meetings, online surveys, email, public comment and USPS mail and it directly affected the transition plan that will carry us through the next several years. Options you strongly favored were part of the final recommendation: volunteerism, fee increases and transfers. Ideas you rejected were left out of the plan: the development of park land. In March 2002, I declared to the King County Council that our tremendously successful parks system was on the verge of a complete shutdown because of the revenue constraints facing us. Parks was faced with trimming \$10 million from its 2003 budget in response to the County's \$52 million budget shortfall. We have come a long way since then.

To meet this challenge, we cut the budget to the bone, but we knew cutting alone wouldn't get us there. We knew we had to be creative. We fundamentally refocused and reprioritized the division's mission and goals and embraced a new way of doing business. We are not yet out of the woods, but we have emerged at the end of the year with a clear sense of purpose, a road map for change and many successes under our belt.

Parks budget cut to the bone

- Parks trimmed \$10 million from its 2003 budget by cutting 85 full time positions, some programs, and divesting itself of some facilities, among other things.

A roadmap for change - the creation of a transition plan

- A citizen task force (the Metropolitan Parks Task Force - MPTF) representing a broad cross section of the community was created by the Executive to recommend long and short-term solutions for parks in the face of budget shortfalls. (March 25, 2002)
- An unprecedented public outreach effort was conducted and input from more than 3,200 residents was considered by the MPTF in the development of its recommendations. (May - June, 2002).
- Recommendations for stabilizing parks financially and operationally were issued by the MPTF just three months after its first meeting. (June 12, 2002)
- A second report by another citizen commission (Active Sports and Youth Recreation Commission - ASpYRe) looking at enhancing parks was issued. (July 12, 2002)
- The Executive issued The Parks Business Transition Plan, based on MPTF recommendations, the ASpYRe report and public input. The plan outlines the new direction for parks and provides a roadmap for change. (July 18, 2002)
- Parks was given more flexibility than ever to generate new revenue when the King County Council passed the Executive's transition plan. (November 13, 2002)

The County's role redefined - regional facilities, environmental stewardship

- Progress was made in efforts to limit Parks' role as a local service provider and concentrate on regional assets by divesting itself of 27 facilities in 19 cities for annual savings to the County of \$4.6 million. (July - December 2002)
- A fish ladder at Big Finn Hill Park was completed by King County and the Denny Creek Neighborhood Alliance. (October 11, 2002)

New ways of doing business embraced

- For the first time ever, parks issued a nationwide request for ideas and proposals for new and innovative concepts to enhance services and generate revenue for parks and pools. (October 3, 2002)
- An outdoor concert series and an athletic field complex are among the enhancements to Marymoor announced and are expected to generate enough revenue to allow the park to pay for itself. (October 21, 2002)
- Park and recreation user fees, most of which have not increased in several years, were increased in order to provide partial operating support for King County Parks. (November 27, 2002)
- Campsite enhancements such as water and RV hook-ups were announced for Tolt McDonald and the Enumclaw Fairgrounds, which could increase revenue generated by the facilities by as much as 110 percent. (October 8, 2002)

New partnerships allow parks to enhance services in the face of severe budget constraints

- A new soccer complex and professionally managed wetlands were the result of a unique partnership between the County, Cascade Land Conservancy, Lake Washington Youth Soccer Association and Quadrant Corporation. (October 10, 2002)
- King County brought a new scoreboard to Mel Olson Stadium, the White Center youth ballpark, through a partnership with SAFECO Corporation. (March 25, 2002)
- A private, non-profit group, Friends of King County Parks, was formed to support King County Parks through financial endowments, organizational grants and capital projects. (October 7, 2002)

Looking Ahead:

- On January 8, 2003, the Metropolitan Parks Task Force reconvened to review the progress made and discuss next steps to confront revenue targets and shortfalls.
- On January 15, we will present a "what if" scenario to the King County Council that will outline the cuts and closures necessary if revenue targets are not met.
- We will continue pursuing entrepreneurial ventures.
- On February 15, we will present to the King County Council plans for generating additional revenue in 2004 needed to keep parks operational.

- Expect to see a survey early this year to gain views on how we are doing and what you want us to do better.

We still have significant challenges before us, and with that comes the incredible opportunity to reinvent government. I look forward in the coming year to sharing news of how we are meeting this challenge, hearing from you about how we are doing and what we can do better.

Next week I will have news of the Metropolitan Parks Task Force reconvening and our continued work to establish productive partnerships.

Sincerely,

Ron Sims
King County Executive

Jan. 17, 2003

King County Parks update

Dear King County Parks supporter:

As the Metropolitan Parks Task Force investigates new revenue streams, parks continues its transition to new ways of doing business.

Marymoor benefits from volunteerism

At public meetings last year, you encouraged us to work more with volunteers as a way to trim costs. On Jan. 20, as many as 400 volunteers will spend their Martin Luther King Day at Marymoor planting new trees and shrubs, and controlling weeds. The project not only makes financial sense, but it brings a multitude of benefits to the park: maintenance and protection of wildlife and habitat, improved aesthetics to the park, increased shading (from newly planted trees and shrubs) to help control invasive plant species, improved education with interpretive signs, long-term community commitment to adopt the areas, increased public safety, and increased public partnership. More information is available online, at <http://dnr.metrokc.gov/dnradmin/press/2003/0108mlkd.htm>

New partnership keeps education program in schools

Though King County cut nearly \$10 million from this year's parks budget, we remain committed to our mission of providing excellent services and programs to parks users. Partnerships are a great way of ensuring programs and services remain accessible to the public, while helping us meet our goal to trim costs. A new partnership between King County and the non-profit organization Nature Vision will keep environmental education classes alive in King County schools. More information is available online, at <http://dnr.metrokc.gov/dnradmin/press/2003/0106ppnv.htm>.

Metropolitan Parks Task Force (MPTF) considers potential future revenue options for parks

In its June 2002 report, the MPTF recognized that despite aggressive transfers and innovative ways of doing business, new revenue sources in support of parks would still be needed. It concluded a new revenue stream would be needed to preserve and stabilize parks in 2004 and beyond. The MPTF is scheduled to meet weekly during the month of Jan. and will present final recommendations on revenue enhancement at the end of the month. More information on the MPTF and upcoming meetings is available online, at <http://www.metrokc.gov/exec/mptf/>.

King County Aquatic Center hosts Olympic event

Though challenged, our park assets continue to bring national attention to this region. The U.S. Olympic trials for synchronized swimming are being held this Saturday at the Weyerhaeuser-King County Aquatic Center.

Next week I will have more information to share on research being conducted by the Task Force and new ways of doing business parks continues to implement.

Thank you for your ongoing support of parks.

Sincerely,

Ron Sims

King County Executive

Feb. 10, 2003

King County Parks update

Dear King County Parks supporter:

This week was significant in the future of King County Parks. The Metropolitan Parks Task Force held its final meeting and issued a recommendation on future funding for parks, and we continued implementing new ways of doing business.

Task Force recommends a levy to support parks

After five weeks of deliberation, the Task Force recommended a 5.5 cent levy be put before King County voters to continue operating and better maintaining regional parks, open space lands and trails. A final report will be available online by the end of this week. For more information on the Task Force deliberations and final recommendations see, <http://dnr.metrokc.gov/parks/transition-plan/>. The recommendations now go to Executive Ron Sims for his action. It is expected he will send legislation to the King County Council for further consideration.

Marymoor parking fee generates nearly \$25,000 for parks in its first weekend

The first weekend of collecting a new one-dollar parking fee at Marymoor Park went very well. The daily fee and sales of six-month parking passes helped generate \$24,730 for King County Parks. A unique partnership with S.O.D.A (Serve Our Dog Areas) where \$5 of every \$50 parking pass sold is retained by S.O.D.A., raised \$2,065, which will be used for stewardship of the off-leash dog area in Marymoor. Selling parking passes also boosted S.O.D.A.'s membership by 85. All funds will provide partial operating support for King County Parks.

More information about the parking fee is available online, at

<http://dnr.metrokc.gov/dnradmin/press/2003/0204park.htm>.

More information about how to purchase a six-month parking pass is available online, at

<http://www.metrokc.gov/parks/news/020303parkfee.htm>.

Partnerships to improve youth recreation facilities were announced

Our new way of doing business recognizes that partnerships are a way to retain services and programs while minimizing parks' dependence on general taxes. This week we announced the allocation of \$544,446 in matching grants to organizations throughout King County that promote youth sports, including school districts, suburban cities and community groups. The grants will be used to renovate or improve ball fields, playgrounds, and a skateboard park. By leveraging these grant funds that come from car rentals, not our greatly reduced parks budget, we are able to continue improving recreation opportunities for our kids. More information about these grants is available online, at **Error! Hyperlink reference not valid..**

Thank you for your ongoing support of parks.

Sincerely,

Ron Sims

King County Executive

2/21/03

Dear Parks Supporter:

As you know, the past six months have seen tremendous changes in the way King County parks does business. Last week I proposed a modest 5-cent, six-year operating levy to protect the public investment in over 25,000 acres of parks, active recreation facilities, open space and more than 100 miles of trails. If approved by the King County Council, it would come before voters May 20 of this year.

This levy is about letting King County residents make the decision about protecting their investment in our parks. Because of the tremendous progress we have made changing the way we do business, we are able to keep the levy low and give the public a reasonable option of keeping parks open and maintaining them at higher levels – meaning better maintained trails, ball fields, sport courts; cleaner bathrooms and more frequent litter removal.

The 5-cent levy would cost the owner of a \$250,000 home \$12.50 a year and would expire after six years.

More information, including a list of the parks that would be supported by the levy, is available online, at <http://www.metrokc.gov/exec/news/2003/022003.htm>.

Agreement reached to save Kent Pool

Last week King County and Kent announced an agreement to transfer the Kent Pool to the City of Kent. The deal means that nine of the 10 in-city pools the County marked for transfer will be open to the public under transfer or operating agreements. The pool could re-open as soon as the beginning of March. More information about this agreement is available online, at <http://www.metrokc.gov/exec/news/2003/021303.htm>.

Sand field fees brought in line with other fees

In an effort to have fees reflect the cost of providing service, higher user fees went into effect at the beginning of the year for all facilities but sand fields, which were granted more time for examination of revenue numbers. The King County Council voted last week to bring sand field fees in line with fees for grass fields.

You voiced support for higher fees at our public meetings last year and in an Internet survey answered by hundreds. One of the messages that came through loud and clear is that youth sports should continue to be subsidized at a higher level than adult sports. We have taken that to heart and the new fees reflect a higher subsidy for youth sports. Still, the per-hour cost of playing a game of soccer or baseball is less expensive for adults and kids than going movie.

Concerts at Marymoor series announces first artist: Grammy-winner Norah Jones!
The new outdoor concert series at King County's Marymoor Park in Redmond is off to a rousing start with the announcement that Grammy-winner Norah Jones will perform at the park on August 5. You will recall that the concert series is one of the partnerships we created as a way to generate revenue for parks. The summer concert series is expected to generate as much as \$300,000 for King County parks. More information is available online, at <http://dnr.metrokc.gov/dnradmin/press/2003/0219nora.htm>.

Sincerely, Ron Sims, King County Executive